

## **Boone-Montgomery Multiple County Family Court Project**

### Basic Information on Boone County

Population: 46,107

County Seat: Lebanon

Number of judicial officers: 3

Project Implementation: January 2002

Boone County Project Judge: Judge Steve David

Family Court Personnel: The project was implemented with a new, part-time family court administrator position (25 hours per week) that serves both counties.

Contact person for both counties:

Rita Lindsey-Bowman, rlbowman@usa.com, 317-752-5169

### Basic Information on Montgomery County

Population: 37,629

County Seat: Crawfordsville

Number of judicial officers: 3

Montgomery County Project Judge: Judge Thomas Milligan

Contact Person: Rita Lindsey-Bowman, rlbowman@usa.com, 317-752-5169 (same for Boone County)

### Combined Funding for Boone & Montgomery

Family Court Project Funding to cover both counties

\$60,000 (\$30,000 per year, for two-year period from January 2002 through December 2003

\$12,000 (2004)

\$10,000 (2005)

All the grant funds are deposited in Boone County and all expenses are paid from that account. The counties share an employee who works a portion of each week in each county.

## Family Court Mission Statement

The mission of the Boone-Montgomery County Family Court Project is to identify multiple case families in each county and apply the *one judge-one family* model. Our program is designed to provide a more efficient judicial system for both families and courts by reducing the number of hearings on related matters and reducing the risk of inconsistent findings and orders for these families, especially in criminal matters and cases involving domestic relations, CHINS, paternity, and delinquency. We seek to operate with due process while resolving conflicts through the implementation of remedies, including counseling, self-help, mediation/facilitation, and other appropriate government and community services.

## Family Court Programming

### **Multiple-Case Family Coordination – Case Bundling**

Boone and Montgomery Counties primarily use the *one judge-one family* model. In each county, multiple case families are referred to the Family Court Administrator from the judiciary, Department of Child Services case managers, CASAs, attorneys, and others. The Administrator researches the court records on each of the referred families and prepares a written recommendation to the involved judges for one or more of the following options: case bundling and transfer, combined status conferences, or information sharing. The judges accept or reject the recommendations, and the necessary orders and case transfers are initiated to open a family court proceeding.

Both counties are very positive about the efficiencies of *bundling* related cases before the same judge. Judge Milligan is particularly interested in avoiding duplication of services by Probation and the Department of Child Services when a family has dual criminal and CHINS litigation.

One unique aspect of this project is the combined status conferences in CHINS and criminal cases involving the same incident of child abuse or neglect. Boone County conducts the combined status conferences to determine if there are any conflicting protective or treatment orders in the two cases, and to clarify the time lines for both proceedings to avoid unnecessary delay for the child.

### **ADR in Low Income/Pro Se Divorce and Paternity Cases**

In 2004, Boone and Montgomery Counties filed ADR Plans to increase filing fees to subsidize mediation services to low-income parties in divorce and paternity cases. Both counties have developed and implemented individual, affordable, non-adversarial dispute resolution plans. The courts have utilized the services of the Family Court/ADR Plan Administrator, and local attorney mediators as "facilitators" for complex family cases assigned to the Circuit and Superior court judges. These informal conferences have often resulted in case resolution, however, when no agreement can be reached, the litigation remains under the family court umbrella and a hearing is held in the court with

jurisdiction over the matter.

**Families Served in Boone and Montgomery Counties**

The joint Family Court Pilot Project was implemented in January 2002. **Boone** County has served 58 families and **Montgomery** County has served approximately 50 families, through August 2005.

The individual ADR Plans were implemented in 2004. Thirty-five (35) parties have participated in Facilitation under the **Boone** County ADR Plan; forty-two (42) parties have participated in Facilitation under the **Montgomery** County ADR Plan, through August 31, 2005.